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SHE A. History of Adventure

By J. RIDER HAGGARD.

CHAPTER XXVL WHAT WE SAW.

Then came a few moments' pause, during which Ayesha seemed to be gathering up her strength for the flery trial, while we clung to each other and waited in utter silence.

At last, from far, far away came the first began to crash and bellow in the distance. As she heard it, Ayesha swiftly threw off her gauzy wrapping, loosened her golden snake from her kirtle, and then, shaking her lovely hair about her like a garment, beneath it cover slipped the kirtle off, and replaced the snaky belt around her and outside the masses of falling hair. There she stood before us as Eve might have stood before Adam, clad in nothing but her abundant locks, held round by her golden band; and no words of mine can tell how sweet she looked-and yet how divine. Nearer and nearer came the thunder wheels of fire, and as they came she pushed one ivory arm through the dark masses of her bair and flung it round Leo's neck.

Oh, my love, my love," she murmured "wilt then ever know how I have loved thee!" and she bassed him on the forehead and then went and stood in the pathway of the flame

On came the crashing, rolling noise, and the sound thereof was as though a forest were being swept flat by a mighty wind and then tossed up by it like so much grass and thundered down a mountain side. Nearer and nearer it came; now flashes of light, forerunners of the revolving pillar of flame, were passing like arrows through the rosy nic; and now the edge of the pillar itself appeared. A yesha turned toward it and stretched out her arms to great it. On it came, very slow-My, and lapped her round with flame, I saw whe fire run no her form. I saw her lift it swifts both her hands as though it were water and pour it over her head. I even saw her open her resulth and draw it down into her lungs, and a shead and wonderful sight it

Then she paused and stretched out her arms and stood there quite still, with a heavenly smile upon her face, as though she were the very spirit of the flame,

The mysterious fire played up and down her dark and rolling locks, twining and twistdag itself through and around them like threads of golden lace; it gleamed upon her ivory breast and shoulder, from which the hair had slipped aside; it slid along her pillared throat and delicate features and seemed to find a home in the glorious eyes that shope and shone more brightly even than the spiritnal essence.

Oh, how beautiful she looked there in the flame! No angel out of heaven could have worn a greater leveliness. Even now my heart faints before the recollections of it as she stood and smiled at our awed faces, and I would give half my remaining time upon this earth to see her once like that again.

But suddenly-more suddenly than I can describe-a kind of change came over her face, a change which I could not define or explain on paper, but none the less a change. The smile vanished and in its place there came a dry, hard look; the rounded face seemed to grow pinched, as though some great anxiety were leaving its impress upon The glorious eyes, too, lost their light, and, as I thought, the form its perfect shape

and erectness. I rubbed my eyes, thinking that I was the victim of some ballucination, or that the refraction from the intense light produced an optical delusion; and, as I did so, the flaming pillar slowly twisted and thundered off whithersoever it passes to in the bowels of the great earth, leaving Ayesha standing where

As soon as it was gone she stepped forward It had been. to Leo's side—it seemed to me that there was no spring in her step—and stretched out her hand to lay it on his shoulder. I gazed at the arm. Where was its wonderful roundness and beauty? It was getting thin and angular. And her face-by heaven!-her face was

growing old before my eyes! I suppose that Lee saw it also; certainly he recoiled a step

"What is it, my Kallikrates!" she said, and her voice-what was the matter with those deep and thrilling notes! They were quite high and cracked.

"Why, what is it-what is it?" she said, confusedly, "I feel dazed. Surely the quality of the fire both not altered. Can the principle of life alter? Tell me, Kallikrates, is there aught wrong with my eyes? I see not clear," and she put her hand to her head and touched her hair-and, oh, horror of horrors!-it all fell off upon the floor, leaving her utterly bald.

"Oh, look! look! look!" shricked Job, in a shrill falsetto of terror, his eyes nearly dropping out of his head, and foam upon his lips. Look! look! look! she's shriveling up! she's turning into a monkey!" and down he fell upon the floor, foaming and gnashing in a fit.

True enough-I faint even as I write it in the living presence of that terrible recollection-she was shriveling up; the golden snake that had encircled her gracious form slipped over her hips and fell upon the ground; over her hips and fell upon the ground; smaller and smaller she grow; her skin changed color, and in place of the perfect whiteness of its luster it turacd dirty brown and yellow, like an old piece of withered parchment. She felt at her bald head; the delicate hand was nothing but a claw now, a human talon, like that of a badly preserved Egyptian mummy, and then she seemed to realize what kind of change was passing over her, and she shrieked—ah, she shriekedi—she rolled upon the floor and shrieked!

rolled upon the floor and shrieked! Smaller she grew, and smaller yet, till she was no larger than a she baboon. Now the skin was puckered into a million wrinkles, and on the shapeless face was the stamp of unutterable ago. I never saw anything like it; nobody ever saw anything like the frightful age that was graven on that fearful coun tenance, no bigger now than that of a two months' child, though the skull remained tha same size, or nearly so, and let all men pray to God they never may, if they wish to keep

At last she lay still, or only feebly moving.

She who but two minutes before had gazed upon us the loveliest, noblest, most splendid woman the world had ever seen, she lay still before us, near the masses of her own dark hair, no larger than a big monkey, and hideous—ah, too hideous for words. And yet, think of this—at that very moment I thought of it—it was the same woman!

She was dying; we saw it, and thanked God—for while she lived she could feel, and what must she have felt? She raised herself upon her bony hands, and blindly gased around her, swaying her head slowly from side to side as a tortoise does. She could not see, for her whitish eyes were covered with a horny film. Oh, the horrible pathos of the

normy him. Oh, the norrible pathos of the sight! But she could still speak.

"Kallikrates," she said in husky, trembling notes. "Forget me not, Kallikrates. Have pity on my shame; I s'iall come again, and shall once more be beautiful, I swear it—it is true! Oh—h—h—!!" and she fell upon her face and was still! face and was still.

On the very spot where twenty centuries before she had siain the old Kallikrates, she herself fell down and died.

herself fell down and died.

Overcome with the extremity of horror, we, too, fell on the sandy floor of that dread place, and swooned away.

I know not how long we lay thus. Many heurs, I suppose. When at last I opened my eyes the other two were still outstretched upon the floor. The rosy light still beamed like a celestial dawn, and the thunder whoels of the spirit of life stilled rolled upon their accustomed track, for as I awoke the great accustomed track, for as I awoke the great accustomed track, for as I awoke the great pillar was passing away. There, too, lay the hideous little monkey frame, covered with crinkled yellow parchment, that once had been the glorious She. Alas! it was no hideous dream-it was an awful and unparalleled

What had happened to bring this shocking change about? Had the nature of the life giving fire changed? Did it perhaps from time to time send forth an essence of death instead of an essence of life? Or was it that the frame once charged with its marvelous virtue could bear no more, so that were the process repeated—it mattered not what lapse of time—the two impregnations neutralized each other and left the body on which they er and left the body on which they it was before it ever came into con tact with the very essence of life? This, and this alone, would account for the sudden and terrible aging of Avesha, as the whole length have not the slightest doubt myself but that the frame now lying before me was just what the frame of a woman would be if by any in her till she at length died at the age of

wenty-two centuries.

But who can tell what had happened? But who can ten what had happened? There was the fact. Often since that awful hour I have reflected that it required no great stretch of imagination to see the finger of Providence in the matter. Ayesha locked up in her living tomb, waiting from age to age for the coming of her lover, worked but a small change in the order of the world. But Ayesha, strong and happy in her love, clothed in immortal youth and godlike beauty, and the wisdom of the centuries, would have revolutionized society, and even perchance have changed the destiny of man-kind. Thus she opposed barrels kind. Thus she opposed herself against the eternal law, and strong though she was, by it was swept back to nothingness—swept back

with shame and hideons mockery.

For some minutes I by faintly turning these terrors over in my mind, while my physical strength came back to me, which it soon did in that buoyant atmosphere. Then I bethought me of the others, and staggered o my feet to see if I could arouse them. first I took up Ayesha's kirtle and the gauzy scarf with which she had been wont to hide her dazzling loveliness from the eyes of men, and, averting my head so that I might look upon it, covered up that dreadful relic of the glorious dead, that shocking epitome of human beauty and human life. I did this nurriedly, fearing lest Leo should recover and

see it again. Then, stepping over the perfumed masses of dark hair that lay upon the sand, I stooped down by Job, who was lying upon his face, and turned him over. As I did so his arm fell back in a way that I did not like, and which sent a chill through me, and I glanced sharply at him. One look was enough. Our old and faithful servant was dead. Hi nerves, already shattered by all he had seen and undergone, had utterly broken down beneath this last dire sight, and he had died of terror, or in a fit brought on by terror. One had only to look at his face to see it.

It was another blow; but perhaps it may

help people to understand how overwhelmingly awful was the experience through which we had passed—we did not feel it much at the time. It seemed quite natural that the poor old fellow should be dead. When Leo came to himself, which he did with a grean and trembling of the limbs about ten minutes afterward, and I told him that Job was de he merely said, "Oh!" And, mind you, this was from no heartlessness, for he and Job were much attached to each other; and he often talks of hire now with the deepest regret and affection. It was only that his nerves would bear no more. A harp can only give out a certain quantity of sound, how

give out a certain quantity of sound, however heavily it is smitten.

Well, I set myself to recovering Leo,
whom, to my infinite relief, I found was not
dead, but only fainting, and in the end I succeeded, as I have said, and he sat up; and then
I saw another dreadful thing. When we
entered that awful place his curling hair had
been of the ruddlest gold, now it was turning
gray, and by the time we gained the outer
air it was snow white. Besides, he isoked
twenty years older. twenty years older.

twenty years older.

"What is to be done, old fellow?" he said, in a hollow, dead sort of voice, when his mind had cleared a little, and a recollection of what had happened forced itself upon it.

"Try and get out, I suppose," I answered; "that is unless you would like to go in there," and I pointed to the column of fire that was once more rolling by.

that was once more rolling by.

'I would go in if I were sure it would kill me," he said, with a little laugh. "It was my cursed hesitation that did this. If I had not been afraid she might never have tried to show me the road. But I am not sure. The fire might have the opposite effect upon me. It might make me immortal; and, old fellow,

I have not the patience to wait a couple

thousand years for her to come back again as be did for me. I had rather die when me cour comes and I should fancy that it isn't far off either—and go my ways to look for her. Do you go in, if you like." But I nerely shook my head, my excitement

But I merely shook my head, my excitement was as dead as ditch water, and my distasts for the prolongation of my mortal span had come back upon me more strongly than ever. Besides, we nother of us knew what the effects of the fire might be. The result upon She had not been of an encouraging nature, and of the exact causes that produced that result we were, of course, ignorant.

"Well, my boy," I said, "we can't stop here till we go the way of those two," and I pointed to the little heap under the white garment and to the stiffening corpse of poor Job. "If we are going we had better go. But, by the way, I expect that the lamps have burned out," and I took one up and looked at it, and sure enough it had.

"There is some more oil in the yese," said

"There is some more off in the vase," said Leo, indifferently, "if it is not broken, at

I examined the vessel in question—it was intact. With a trembling hand I filled the lamps—luckily there was still some of the linen wick unburned. Then I lit them with one of our wax matches. While I did so we heard the pillar of fire approaching once more as it went on its never ending journey. if, indeed, it was the same pillar that passe and repassed in a circle.

"Let's see it come once more," said Leo. "we shall never look upon its like again in this

we shall never look upon its like sgall in this world."

It seemed a bit of idle curiosity, but somehow I shared it, and so we waited till, turning slowly round upon its own axis, it had flamed and thundered by; and I remember wondering for how many thousands of years this same phenomenon had been taking place in the bowels of the earth, and for how many thousands it result continue to take more thousands it would continue to take place. I wondered also if any mortal eyes would ever again mark its passage, or any mortal ears be thrilled and fascinated by the swelling volume of its majestic sound. I do not think that they will. I believe that we are the last human beings who will over see

are the last human beings who will over see that unearthly sight. Presently it had gone, and we, too, turned to go.

But before we did so we each took Job's cold hand in ours and shook it. It was a rather ghastly ceremony, but it was the only means in our power of showing our respect to the faithful dead, and of celebrating his obsequies. The heap beneath the white garment we did not uncover. We had no wish to look upon that terrible sight again. But we went to the pite of rippling hair that had fallen from her in the agony of the hideous change which was worse than a thousand natural deaths, and each of us drew from it a shining lock, and these locks we still have, shining lock, and these locks we still have the sole memento that is left to us of Ayesha as we know her in the fullness of her grace and glory. Leo pressed the perfumed hair to his lips.

"She called to me not to forget her," he

said, hoarsely—"and swore that we shoulmeet again. By heaven! I never will forget
her. Here I swear that, if we live to get out
of this, I will not for all my days have anything to say to another living woman, and
that wherever I go I will wait for her afaithfully as also writed for me."

that wherever I go I will wait for her asfaithfully as she waited for me."
"Yes," I thought to myself, "if she comes
back beautiful as we knew her. But supposing she came back like that!"
Well, and then we went. We went, and
left those two in the presence of the very well
and spring of life, but gathered to the cold
company of death. How lonely they looked
as they lay there, and how 'll assorted! That
little heap had been for 2,0.0 years the wisest,
loveliest, proudest creatur s—I can hardly call
her woman—in the whole universe. She had
been wicked, too, in her way; but, alas! such been wicked, too, in her way; but, alas! such is the frailty of the human heart, her wicked ness had not detracted from her charm Indeed, I am by no means certain that it did not add to it. It was, after all, of a grand order; there was nothing mean or small about

And poor Job, too! His presentiment had come true, and there was an end of him. Well, he had a strange burial place—no Nor folk hind ever had a stranger, or ever will; and it is something to lie in the same sepulcher with the poor remains of the imperial She. We looked our last upon them and the inde-

scribable rosy glow in which they lay, and then with hearts far too heavy for words we left them and crept thence broken down men so broken down that we even renounced the chance of practically immortal life, because all that made life valuable had gone from us, and we knew even then that to prolong our days indefinitely would only be to prolong on sufferings. For we felt—yes, both of us—that having once looked Ayesha in the eyes we could not forget her forever and while memory and identity remained. both loved her now and for always; she was stamped and carven on our hearts, and no r woman could ever crase that splendid And I—there lies the sting—1 had and have no right to think thus of her. As she told me, I was naught to her, and never shall be through the unfathomed depths of time, unless, indeed, conditions alter and a day comes at last when two men may love one woman and all three be happy in the fact. It is the only hope of my broken heartedness, and a rather faint one. Beyond it I have nothing. I have paid down this heavy price all that I am worth here and hereafter, and that is my sole reward. With Leo it is different, and often and often I bitterly envy him his happy lot, for if She was right, and her wisdom and knowledge did not fail her at the last, which arguing from the precedent of her own case I think unlikely, he has some future to look forward to. But I have none, and ret-mark the folly and the weakness of the ruman beart, and let him who is wise learn wisdom from it-yet I would not have it otherwise. I mean that I am content to give what I have given and must always giv take in payment those crumbs that fall from my mistress' table, the memory of a few kind words, the hope one day in the far undreamed future of a sweet smile or two of recognition and a little show of thanks for my devotion

to her—and Leo.

If that does not constitute true love I do not know what does, and all I have to say is that it is a very bad state of mind for a man on the wrong side of middle age to fall into.

CHAPTER XXVII.

WE LEAP. We passed through the caves without trouble but when we came to the slope of the inverted cone two difficulties stared us in the face. The first of these was the laborious nature of the ascent, and the next the extreme difficulty of finding our way. Indeed, had it not been for the mental notes that I had fortunately taken of the shape of various rocks, etc., I am sure that we never should have managed it at all, but have wandered about in the dread ful womb of the volcano-for I suppose it must once have been something of the sort-until we died of exhaustion and despair. As it was, we went wrong several times, and once nearly fell into a huge crack or crevasse. It was terrible work creeping about in the dense gloom and awful stillness from bowlder to bowlder and examining it by the feeble lights of the lamp to see if I could recognize its shape. We rarely spoke, our hearts were too heavy for speech, we simply stumbled about, falling sometimes and cutting ourselves in a rather dogged sort of way. The fact was that our spirits were utterly crushed, and we did not greatly care what happened to us. Only we felt bound to try and save our lives while we could, and, indeed, a natural instinct prompted us to it. So for some three or four hours, I should think-I cannot tell exactly how long, for we had no watch left that would go-we blundered on. During the last two hours we were completely lost, and I began to fear that we had got in the funnel of some subsidiary cone, when at last I suddonly recognized a very large rock which we had passed in descending but a little way from the top. It is a marvel that I should have recognized it, and, indeed, we had already passed it in going at right angles to the proper path, when something about it struck me, and I turned back and examined it in an idle sort of way, and, as it happened, this proved our salvation.

After this we gained the rocky natural stair without much further trouble, and in due course found ourselves back in the little

chamber, where the benighted Noot had lived and died.

But now a fresh terror stared us in the face. It may be remembered that, owing to poor Job's fear and awkwardness, the plank upon which we had crossed from the buge spur to the rocking stone had been whirled off into the guif below.

How were we to cross without the plank!
There was only one answer—we must try
and jump it, or else stop where we were till
we starved. The distance in itselt was not
very great—between eleven and twelve feet,
I should think—and I have seen Leo jump over nineteen feet when he was a young fel-low at college; but then, think of the conditions. Two weary, worn out men, one of them the wrong side of 40, a rocking stone to take off from, a trembling point of rock some few feet across to land on, and a bottomless guif to be cleared in a raging gale. It was bad enough, God knows, but when I pointed ont these things to Leo, he put the whole matter in a mushell by replying that, merciless as the choice was, we must choose between the certainty of a lingering death in the chamber and the risk of a swift one in the chamber and the risk of a swift one in the

air. Of course there was no arguing against this, but one thing was clear, we could not attempt that leap in the dark; the only thing to do was to wait for the ray of light which pierced through the gulf at sunset. How pierced through the gulf at sunset. How near to or he of ar from sunset we might be neither of us had the faintest notion; all we did know was that when at last the light came it would not endure more than a couple of minutes at the outside, so that we must be prepared to meet it. Accordingly, we made up our minds to cresp on to the top of the rocking stone and lie there in readiness. We rocking stone and lie there in readiness. We were the more readily reconciled to this course by the fact that our lamps were once more nearly exhausted—indeed, one had gone out bodily, and the other was jumping up and down, as the flame of a lamp does when the oil is done. So by the aid of its dying light we hastened to crawl out of the little chamber and clamber up the side of the great stone.

chamber and clamber up the side of the great stone.

As we did so the light went out.

The difference in our position was a sufficiently remarkable one. Below, in the little chamber, we had only heard the roaring of the gale overhead; here, lying on our faces on the swinging stone, we were exposed to its full force and fury, as the great draught drew first from this direction and then from that, howling against the mighty precipiee and through the rocky cliffs like 10,000 despairing souls. We lay there hour after hour in terror and misery of mind so deep that I will not attempt to describe it, and listened to the wild storm voices of that Tartarus, as set to the deep undertone of the spur opposite, against which the wind hummed like some awful harp, they called to each other from precipice to pracipice. No nightmare dreamed by man, no wild invention of the romancer, can ever equal the living horror of that these and the wend describes of the content of the romancer, can ever equal the living horror of romancer, can ever equal the living horror of that place and the weird crying of those voices of the night as we lay, like ship-wrecked mariners on a raft, and tossed on s black, unfathomed wilderness of air. Fortranately the temperature was not a low one . nately the temperature was not a low oneindeed, the wind was warm, or we should
have perished. Well, we lay and listened,
and while we still were stretched out upon
the rock a thing happened that was so curious and suggestive in itself, though doubtless
it was a mere coincidence, that, if anything,
it added to rather than deducted from the
handen of our nerves.

burden of our nerves. It will be remembered that when Ayesha was standing on the spur, before we crossed to the stone, the wind tore her cloak from her and whirled it away into the darkness of the and whirled it away into the darkness of the gulf, we could not see whither. Well—I hardly like to tell the story, it is so strange—as we lay there upon the rocking stone, this very cloak came floating out of the black space, like a memory from the dead, and fell on Leo so that it covered him nearly from head to foot. We could not at first make out what it was, but soon discovered by its feel, and then poor Leo for the first time gave feel, and then poor Leo for the first time gave way, and I heard him sobbing there upon the stone. No doubt the cloak had been caught upon some pinnacle of the cliff, and was thence blown hither by a chance gust; but still it was a most curious and touching inci-

Shortly after this, suddenly, without the slightest previous warning, the great red knife of light came stabling the darkness through and through, struck the swaying stone on which we lay and rested its sharp

"Now for it," said Leo, "now or never."
We rose and stretched ourselves, and looked at the cloud wreaths stained the color of blood by that red ray, as they tore through the sickening depths beneath, and then at the empty space between the swaying stone and the quivering rock, and in our hearts des-

the quivering rock, and in our hearts despaired and prepared for death. Surely we could not clear it, desperate though we were. "Who is to go first?" said I.

"Do you, old fellow," answered Leo. "I will sit upon the other side of the stone to steady it You must take as much run as you can end jump high; and God have mercy on as, say I."

I acquiesced with a nod, and then I did a thing I had never done since Leo was a little.

thing I had never done since Leo was a little boy. I turned and put my arm round him and kissed him on the forehead. It sounds rather French, but as a fact I was taking my ast farewell of a man whom I could not have loved more if he had been my own son twice

"Good by, my boy," I said, "I hope that we shall meet again, wherever it is that we go to."
The fact was I did not expect to live another two minutes,

Next I retreated to the far side of the rock. and waited till one of the chopping gusts of wind got behind me, and then commending my soul to God, I ran the length of the huge stone, some three or four and thirty feet, an sprung wildly out into the dizzy air. Ob the sickening terrors that I felt as I launched myself at that little point of rock, and the horrible sense of despair that shot through my brain as I realized that I had jumped short! But so it was; my feet never touched the point; they went down into space; only my hands and body came in contact with it. gripped at it with a yell, but one hand slipped, and I swung right round, holding by the other, so that I faced the stone from which I other, so that I faced the stone from which I had sprung. Wildly I stretched up with my left hand, and this time managed to grasp a knob of rock, and there I hung in the flore red light, with thousands of feet of empty air beneath me. My hands were holding to either side of the under part of the spur, so that its point was touching my head. Therefore even if I could have found the strength I could not pall myself up. The most that I could do would be to hang for about a minute, and then drop down, down into the botute, and then drop down, down into the bot tomless pit. If any man can imagine a more hideous position, let him speak. I felt the spur above me shake beneath the shock of his im-pact, and as it did so I saw the huge rocking pact, and as it did so I saw the huge rocking stone, that had been violently depressed by him as he sprung, fly back when relieved of his weight, till, for the first time during all these centuries, it got beyond its balance, and fell with a most awful crash right into the rocky chamber, which had once served the philosopher Noot for a hermitage, as I have no doubt, forever hermetically sealing the passage that leads to the place of life with some hundreds of tons of rock.

All this happened in a second, and, curi-

All this happened in a second, and, curiously enough, notwithstanding my terrible position, I noted it all involuntarily, as it were. I even remember thinking that no human being would go down that dread path again.

Next instant I felt Leoseize me by the right

wrist with both hands. By lying flat upon his stomach on the point of rock he could just "You must let go and swing yourself clear,

he said, in a calm and collected voice, "and then I will try and pull you up, or we will both go together. Are you ready?" By way of answer I let go, first with my left hand and then with the right, and swayed left hand and then with the right, and swayed out as a consequence clear of the overshadowing rock, my weight hanging upon Leo's arms. It was a dreadful moment. He was a very powerful insn, I knew, but would his strength be equal to lifting me up till I could get a hold on the top of the spar, when owing to his position he had so little purchase?

For a few seconds I swung to and fro, while he gathered himself for the effort, and then I heard his sinews cracking above me and feit myself lifted up as though I were a little child, till I got my left arm around the rock, and my cleast was resting on it. The rest was easy; in two or three more seconds I was up, and we were lying panting side by

side, trembling like leaves, and with the cold erspiration of terror pouring from our skins. And then, as before, the light went out like

a lamp.

For some half hour we lay thus without speaking a word, and then at length we began to creep along the great spur as best we might in the dense gloom. As we got toward the face of the cliff, however, from which the spur sprung out like a spike from a wall, the light increased, though only a very little, for it was night overhead.

We were even without a drop of water to

We were even without a drop of water to stay our thirst, for we had drunk the last in the chamber of Noot. How were we to see to make our way through this last bowlder trewn tunnel?
Clearly all that we could do was to trust to

our sense of feeling and attempt the passage in the dark; so in we crept, fearing that if we delayed to do so our exhaustion would overcome us, and we should probably lie down and die where we were.

Oh, the horrors of that last tunnel! The On, the horrors of that last tunnel! The place was strewn with rocks, and we fell over them and knocked ourselves up against them till we were bleeding from a score of wounds. Our only guide was the side of the cavern, which we kept touching, and so bewildered did we grow in the darkness that we were several times seized with the terrifying thought that we had turned and were traveling the wrong way. On we went, feebly, and still more feebly, for hour after honr, stopping every few minutes to rest, for our strength was spent. Once we fell asleep, and, I think, must have slept for some hours, for when we woke, our limbs were quite stiff and the blood from our blows and scratches had caked and was hard and dry upon our akin. Then we dragged ourselves on again, till at last, when despair was entering into our hearts, we once more beheld the light of the day and found ourselves outside the tunnel in the rocky fold on the outer surface of the cliff that, it will be remembered, led into it.

It was early morning. It had taken us the entire night to crawl through that dreadful place.

"One more effort, Leo," I gasped, "and we ace was strown with rocks, and we fell over

place.

"One more effort, Leo," I gasped, "and we shall reach the slope where Billali is, if he hasn't gone. Come, don't give way," for he had cast himself upon his face. He got up, and, leaning on each other, we got down that fifty feet or so of cliff—somehow—I have not the least notion how. I only remember that we found ourselves lying in a heap at the bottom, and then once more began to drag ourselves along en our hands and knees toward the grove where She had told Billali to wait her rearrival, for we could not walk another foot. We had not gone fifty yards in this fashion, when suddenly one of the mutes emerged from some trees on our left, through emerged from some trees on our left, through which, I presume, he had been taking a morning stroll, and came running up to see what sort of strange animals we were. He stared, and stared, and then held up his hands in horror and nearly fell to the ground. Next he started off as hard as he could for the grove, some 200 yards away. No wonder that he was horrifled at our appearance, for we must have been a shocking sight. To begin, Leo, with his golden curls turned a snowy white, his clothes nearly rent from his body, his worn face and his hands a mass of bruises, cuts and blood—incrusted flith—was a sufcuts and blood—incrusted inth—was a sufficiently alarming spectacle as he painfully dragged himself along the ground, and I have no doubt that I was little better. I know that two days afterward, when I looked at my face in some water, I scarcely knew myself. I have never been famous for beauty, but there was compthing besides unliness but there was something besides ugliness stamped upon my features, that I have never got rid of until this day—something resem-bling that wild look with which a startled bling that wild look with which a startled person wakes from deep sleep more than anything that I can think of. And really it is not to be wondered at. What I do wonder at is that we escaped at all with our reason. Presently to my intense relief I saw old Bil lall hurrying toward us, and even the a I could scarcely help smiling at the expression of consternation on his dignified countenance. "Oh, my Baboon!" my Baboon!" he cried "my dear son, is it indeed thee and the Lion? Why, his mane that was as ripe as corn is

Why, his mane that was as ripe as corn is white like the snow. Whence come ye, and where is the Pig, and where, too, She-who-must-be-obeyed?"

"Dead, both dead," I answered; "but ask

not questions; help us, and give us food and water, or we, too, shall die before thine eyes. Seest thou not that our tongues are black for

want of water? How can we talk then?" never dies, dead, how can it be?" and then perceiving, I think, that his face was being watched by the mutes who had come running up he checked himself and motioned to them

to carry us to the camp, which they did.
Fortunately when we arrived some broth was boiling on the fire, and with this Billali fed us, for we were too weak to feed ourselves, thereby, I firmly believe, saving us from death by exhaustion. Then he bade the mutes wash the blood and grime from as with wet cloths, and after that we were laid down upon piles of aromatic grass and instantly fell into the dead sleep of absolute exhaustion of mind and body.

> CHAPTER XXVIII. OVER THE MOUNTAIN.

The next thing I recollect is a feeling of the most dreadful stiffness, and a sort of vague idea passing through my half awakened brain that I was a carpet that had just been beaten. I opened my eyes, and the first thing they fell on was the venerable countenance of our old friend Billali, who was seated by th side of the improvised bed upon which I was sleeping and thoughtfully stroking his long beard. The sight of him at once brought back to my mind a recollection of all that we had recently passed through, which was accentuated by the vision of poor Leo lying opposite to me, his face knocked almost to jelly, and his beautiful crown of curls turned from yellow to white, and I shut my eyes again and groaned.

"Thou hast slept long, my Baboon," said the old Billali.

"How long, my father?" I asked. "A round of the sun and a round of the moon, a day and a night, hast thou slept, and the Lion also. See, he sleepeth yet." "Blessed is sleep," I answered, "for it swal-

ows up recollection." "Tell me," he said, "what bath befallen ye, and what is this strange story of the death of her who dieth not. Bethink thee, my son; if this be true, then is thy danger and the danger of the Lion very great-nay, almost is the pot red wherewith ye shall be potted, and the tomachs of those who shall eat ye are already hungry for the feast. Knowest thou not that these Amahagger, my children, these dwellers in the caves, hate ye more because of their brethren whom she put to the torture for yel Assuredly, if once they learn that there is naught to fear from Hiya, from the terrible She who must be obeyed, they will slay ye by the pot. But let me hear thy tale, my poor Baboon.

not everything, indeed, for I did not think it desirable to do so, but sufficient for my purpose, which was to make him understand She was really no more, having fallen into some fire, and, as I put it-for the real thing would have been incomprehensible to himbeen burned up. I also told him some of the horrors we had undergone in effecting our escape, and these produced a great impre on him. But I clearly saw that he did not believe in the report of Ayesha's death. believed indeed that we thought that was dead, but his explanation was that it had suited her to disappear for a while. Once, he said, in his father's time, she had done so for ten years, and there was a tradition in the country that many centuries back no one had seen her for a whole generation, when she suddenly reappeared, and destroyed a woman who had assumed the position of queen. I said nothing to this, but only shook my head sadly. Alas! I know too well that Ayesha would appear no more, at any rats that Billall would never see her.

"And now," concluded Billall, "what woulds thou do, my Baboon!"
"Nay, I said, "I know not, my father. Can we not escape from this country!" was dead, but his explanation was that it had

Thus adjured, I set to work and told him-

"Any, I said, "I know not, my lather. Can we not escape from this country?" He shook his head.
"It is very difficult. By Kor ye cannot

pass, for ye would be seen, and as soon as those flerce ones found that ye were alone, well," and he smiled significantly and made well," and he smiled significantly and made a movement as though he were placing a hat on his head. "But there is a way over the cliff where of I once spake to ye, where they drive the cattle out to pasture. Then beyond the pastures are three days lourney through the marshes, and after that I know not, but I have heard that seven days' journey from thence is a mighty river which floweth to the black water. If ye could come thither, perchance ye might escape, but how can ye come thither!"

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come thither!"

"Billall," I said, "once, thou knowest, I did save thy life. Now pay back the debt, my father, and save me mine and my friend's, the Lion's. It shall be a pleasant thing for thee to think of when thine hour comes, and something to set in the scale against the evildoing of thy days, if perchance thou hast done any evil. Also, if thou be right, and if She doth but hide herself, surely when she comes again she shall reward thee."

"My son the Baboon," answered the old man, "think not that I have an ungrateful heart. Well do I remember how thou didst rescue me when those dogs stood by to see me drown. Measure for measure will I give thee, and if thou canst be saved, surely I will save

heart. Well do I remember how then didst rescue me when those dogs stood by to see me drown. Measure for measure will I give thee, and if thou canst be saved, surely I will save thee. Listen: by dawn to-morrow be prepared, for litters shall be here to bear ye away across the mountains, and through the marshes beyond. This will I do, saying that it is the word of She that it be done, and he who obeyeth not the word of She food is he for the hyenas. Then when ye have crossed the marshes, ye must strike with your own hand, so that perchance, if good fortune go with ye, ye may live to come to that black water whereof ye told me. And now, see, the Lion wakes, and ye must eat the food I have made ready for ye."

Leo's condition when once he was fairly aroused proved not to be so bad as might have been expected from his appearance, and we both of us managed to eat a bearty meal, which indeed we needed sadly enough. After this we limped down to the spring and bathed, and then came back and slept again till evening, when we once more ate enough for five. Billall was away all that day, no doubt making arrangements about litters and bearers, for we were wakened in the middle of the night by the arrival of a considerable number of men in the little camp.

At dawn the old man himself appeared,

of the night by the arrival of a considerable number of men in the little camp.

At dawn the old man himself appeared, and told us that he had, by using She's dreaded name, though with some difficulty, succeeded in getting the necessary men and two guides to conduct us across the swamps, and that he urged us to start at once, at the same time announcing his intention of accompanying vs, so as to protect us against treachery. I was much touched by this act of kindness on the part of that wily old barbarian toward two utterly defenseless strangers. A three—or in his case, for he would have to return, six—days' journey through those deadly swamps was no light undertaking for a man of his age, but he consented to it cheerfully in order to promote our safety. ing for a man of his age, but he consented to it cheerfully in order to promote our safety. It shows that even among those dreadful Amahagger—who are certainly, with their gloom and their devilish and feroclous rites, by far the most terrible savages that I ever heard of—there are people with kindly hearts. Of course self interest may have had something to do with it. He may have thought that She would suddenly reappear and demand an account of us at his hands; but still, allowing for all deductions, it was a great deal more than we could expect under the circumstances, and I can only say that I shall for as long as I live cherish a most affectionate remembrance of my nominal fectionate remembrance of my nominal parent, old Billali.

Accordingly, after swallowing some food, we started in the litters, feeling, so far as our bodies went, wonderfully like our old selves after our long rest and sleep. I must leave the condition of our minds to the imagi-

nation.

Then came a terrible pull up the cliff. Sometimes the ascent was natural, more often it was a zigzng road way cut, no doubt, in the first instance by the old inhabitants of Kor. The Amahagger say they drive their spare cattle over it once a year to pasture outside; all I know is that those cattle must be uncommonly active on their feet. Of course the litters were useless here, so we had to walk.

For three whole days, through stench and mire, and the all prevailing flavor of fover, did our bearers struggle along, till at length we came to open, rolling ground, quite uncultivated, and mostly trecless, but covered with game of all sorts, which lies beyond that almost desolate, and without guides utterly impracticable, district.

mostly treeless, but covered with game of all sorts, which lies beyond that almost desolate, and without guides utterly impracticable, district. And here on the following morning we bade farewell, not without some regret, to old Billali, who stroked his white beard, and solemnly blessed us.

"Farewell, my son the Baboon," he said, "and farewell to thee, O Lion. I can do no more to help ye. But if ever ye come to your own country, oe advised, and venture no more into lands that ye know not, lest ye come back no more, but leave your white bones to mark the limit of your journeyings. Farewell once more; often shall I think of ye, nor wilt thou forget me, my Baboon, for though thy face is ugly thy heart is true." And then he turned and went, and with him went the tail and sullen looking bearers, and that was the last that we saw of the Annahagger. Wo watched them winding away with the empty litters like a procession bearing dead men from a battle, till the mists from the marsh gathered round them and hid them, and then, left utterly desolate in the vast wilderness, we turned and gazed around us and at each other.

Three weeks or so before, four mon had entered the marshes of Kor, and now two of us were dead, and the other two had gone through adventures and experiences so strange and terrible that death himself hath not a more fearful countenance. Three weeks—and only three weeks!

Truly time should be measured by events and not by the lapse of hours. It seemed like thirty years shale we saw the last of our whalehoat.

"We must strike out for the Zambes! Leo." I said, "but God knows if we shall ever get there."

Leo nodded. He had become very silent of late, and we started with nothing but the clothes we stood in, a compass, our reververs and experser rifles, and about 20 rounds of ammunition; and so ended the history of our visit to the ruins of mighty Kor.

we stood in, a compass, our revolvers and express rifles, and about 20 rounds of ammunition; and so ended the history of our visit to the ruins of mighty Kor.

As for the adventures that subsequently be fell us, strange and varied as they were, I have, after deliberation, determined not to record them here. In these pages I have only tried to give a short and clear account of an occurrence which I believe to be unique, and this I have done, not with a view to immediate publication, but merely to put on paper while they are yet fresh in our memories the details of our journey and its result, which will, I believe, prove interesting to the world if ever we determine to make them public. This, as at present advised, we do not intend should be done during our joint lives.

For the rest, it is of no public interest, resembling, as it does, the experience of more than one Central African traveler. Suffice it to say that we did, after incredible hardships and privations, reach the Zambesi, which proved to be about 170 miles south of where Billail left us. There we were for six months imprisoned by a savage tribe, who believed us to be supernatural beings, chiefly on account of Leo's youthful face and snow white hair. From these people we ultimately escaped, and, crossing the Zambesi, wandered off southward, where, when on the point of starvation, we were sufficiently fortunate to tail in with a half caste Portuguess elephants further inland than he had ever been before. This man treated us most hospitably, and ultimately through his assistance we, after innumerable sufferings and adventures, reached Delagos bay more than eighteon months from the day we emerged from the marshes of Kor, and the very next day managed to catch one of the Donald Currie boats that run around the Cape to England. Our journey home was a prosperous one, and we set our foot on the quay at Southampton exactly two years from the date of our departure upon our wild and seemingly ridiculous quest—and now I write these last words with Leo leaning ov

often I sit alone at night, staring with the eyes of the mind into the blackness of unborn time, and wondering in what shape and form the drama will be finally developed, and where the scene of its last act will be laid. And when that final development ultimately occurs, as I have no doubt it must and will occur, in obedience to a fate that never swerves and a purpose that cannot be altered, what will be the part played therein by that Egyptian Amenartas, the princess of the race of the Pharach Hakor, for the love of whom the ancient Kallikrates broke his vows to Isis, and, pursued by the inexorable vengeance of the custoff his doom at Kor. et his doom at Kor.

THE END.